

OPINION OF OHIO FARM OPERATORS REGARDING FARM NUISANCES

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August 1994: Department of Agricultural Economics, Ohio State University {ESO 2152}

Public concern about the impact of farm practices on the quality of life has increased in recent years. Because of its urban character, a potentially important source of public concern in Ohio is nuisances created by farming (e.g., smells, noises). Since farm operators are also neighbors of farms, three questions regarding farm nuisances were asked of Ohio farm operators in a 1994 policy preference survey. Of the 1005 Ohio farm operators surveyed, 58 % returned the survey with useable responses.

Farm operators were first asked if public nuisances created by crop farming practices should be regulated. An analogous question was asked of livestock practices. Approximately 15 % of the responding operators said crop and livestock nuisances should be regulated (see following table). Approximately 30 % were not sure and 50 % said such nuisances should not be regulated. Somewhat surprisingly, responses did not differ by age of the operator, amount of livestock raised, or farm size.

| Public Nuisance | Should be Regulated | Not Sure | Should <u>Not</u> be Regulated | No Response | Total |
|----------------------------|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------|
| | ----- percent of Ohio farm operator respondents ----- | | | | |
| Created by crop practices | 15 | 30 | 49 | 6 | 100 |
| Created by livestock farms | 17 | 28 | 50 | 6 | 100 |

Farm operators also were asked the following situational question: Imagine you live next to a livestock farm. How many consecutive days would you accept objectionable livestock odors before taking action (complaining, calling public official or lawyer, etc.)? Nineteen percent of the responding farm operators said that they would not complain (365 days). On the other hand, 6 % would complain immediately (0 days), and another 6 % would complain within 3 days (see following table). Responses did not differ by age of the operator, amount and type of livestock, farm size, or region of Ohio. This question generated numerous written responses, most of which were associated with the "no response" option. They tended to fall broadly into two categories. The first and most common was that the validity of a complaint depended upon whether the livestock operation was there first. The second was that this was a "stupid" question. From the viewpoint of these authors, this is at best a naive comment that reflects a misunderstanding of the importance of co-habitation in an urban/rural setting. To illustrate the importance of this point, every major livestock production county in Ohio had at least one respondent who would complain about objectionable odors by the third day. And, it is likely that farm operators are less likely to complain than non-farm neighbors.

| <u>Percent of Ohio Farm Operators by Days before Complaining about Objectionable Livestock Odors</u> | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|-------------|------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| 0 days | <u>6%</u> | 4 - 7 days | <u>11%</u> | 16 - 30 days | <u>9%</u> | 365 days | <u>19%</u> |
| 0.5 - 3 days | <u>6%</u> | 8 - 15 days | <u>9%</u> | 31 - 364 days | <u>5%</u> | No Response | <u>35%</u> |

In conclusion, many Ohio farm operators unconditionally are opposed to regulating crop and livestock nuisances, but they do not form an unequivocal majority of farm operators. Furthermore, some farm operators appear to have little tolerance for farm nuisances. Since Ohio farm families are becoming increasingly urbanized, tolerance for farm nuisances among farm folks will likely decline in the future.